April was Volunteer Appreciation Month, and the month whizzed by without me thanking the hundreds (and likely thousands) of active duty and retired officer volunteers who form the bedrock of our association. This celebration of service, initially established in 1974 by Presidential Proclamation by Richard M. Nixon, is more important than ever today. Here is a snippet from the original proclamation:

The spirit of voluntarism, one of the hallmarks of American life, has rarely been stronger than it is today. It has been estimated that one out of every five Americans is contributing time and talent in some kind of voluntary service….I urge all Americans to observe that week by seeking out an area in their community in which they can give to a needy individual or a worthy cause by devoting a few hours, or more, each week to volunteer service. I call upon all communities throughout the United States to recognize volunteers by observing the week with special ceremonies to honor those who have given.

LCDR Abigail and DC COA Officers “Go Fly a Kite”

Members of the District of Columbia Commissioned Officers Association (DC COA) were joined by LCDR Abigail at the National Cherry Blossom Kite Festival on Saturday, March 30, 2024, on the grounds of the Washington Monument.

by CDR Cynthia Chennault, RDH, BSDH, MPH and CDR Cathleen Davies, MS, CCC-SLP, CBIS

The city was lively and vibrant! It was an “egg-citing” way to kick off Easter weekend. The National Cherry Blossom Kite Festival is an annual event that features music, arts & crafts, food, and kites. There are hundreds of kites from all over the world, and skill levels can range from professionals to kids. Every year, kite enthusiasts from all over the country come to fly their creations in the skies above our Nation’s Capital. On Saturday, March 30, 2024, U.S. Public Health Service officers brought along their families to spend a beautiful spring day getting to know each other and showing off their kite flying skills on the grounds of the Washington Monument. As a special treat, LCDR Abigail came along to join in the festivities!
COA Member Benefits

Capitol Hill Representation
Efforts on Capitol Hill continually support all Commissioned Corps officers – active, former, reserve, and retired

Local Representation
COA Local Branches provide venues for meeting fellow officers and a forum for the discussion of issues within the Commissioned Corps

Newsletter
Newsletter reports on monthly activities and items of interest of COA and the USPHS Commissioned Corps

Ribbon
Authorized to be worn on the USPHS uniform by members in good standing when attending COA functions

Insurance Programs
Low-cost insurance programs that may continue as long as your membership in COA remains current

USF Online Programs
Discounted degree and certificate programs like PhD, DrPH, MPH, MSPH, and MHA

NYMC Online MPH
50 percent discount for the online MPH and certificate programs

Scholarship Programs
College scholarships for children, grandchildren, and spouses of COA members and high school seniors

CPH Exam Discount
Deep member discount and free study guide for Certified in Public Health (CPH) Exam

Legislative Update

by CAPT (Ret) Alan Echt, Chair of COA Legislative Affairs Committee

Bettilou Taylor, our advocate from Taylor Strategies, has been meeting with House and Senate staff to move forward with your legislative priorities. Prior to his departure in early April, Dave Corrigan, the former COA Deputy Director was leading these meetings.

Our number one priority for the second session of the 118th Congress is parental leave - to provide the USPHS Commissioned Corp officers parity with the armed forces and NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps. Our strategy is to accomplish this goal through an amendment to 42 USC 213a to grant active duty USPHS officers the leave provisions available to the other uniformed services in 10 USC Chapter 40 (the NOAA Corps is provided with Title 10 Chapter 40 leave authority through a paragraph in 33 USC §3071). We are working to have this amendment included as part of the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). To reach that goal, Ms. Taylor and Mr. Corrigan conducted meetings with the staff of Representatives Landsman (D-OH1), Holmes Norton (D-DC), Houlahan (D-PA6), and Bacon (R-NE2) to ask that they send a letter to the House Armed Services Committee in support of parental leave parity, and they are also working with Reps Houlahan and Bacon to offer an amendment to the House National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Meetings were also held with Senators Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Robert Casey (D-PA), Todd Young (R-IN), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). In addition, a meeting was held with staff of the Chair Reed (D-RI) and Ranking Member Roger Wicker (R-MS) of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Committee staff had no issues with including the parental leave parity amendment in the Senate NDAA, but someone needs to offer the amendment. Your advocates are focusing on Senator Duckworth (D-IL) to offer the amendment. Meetings are also planned with the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee staff and House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee staff to ask that they clear the parental leave amendment for the NDAA (HELP and E&C are the Committees with jurisdiction over the USPHS).

During the meetings with House and Senate staff, your other goals and priorities were discussed. Meetings were also held with Congressional staff on the House Natural Resources Committee to discuss park passes. This goal has run into opposition in the Senate and was blocked in FY 2024 by Senator Barrasso (R-WY), Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Unfortunately, Senator Duckworth’s bill S. 2297, the Parity for Public Health Service Ready Reserve Act, failed to gain traction in the Senate. Only one cosponsor (Senator Wyden (D-OR)) signed on to the Senate bill and no companion bill has been introduced in the House. We are waiting for the Senate markup of the FY 2025 NDAA to learn if any of the
Cultivating Mental Resilience for USPHS Officers

by LCDR Christopher Mendoza-Truong, Pharm.D., CCHP, COA Board Treasurer

Mental Health Awareness Month serves as a timely reminder of the importance of prioritizing mental well-being and destigmatizing conversations surrounding mental health. For USPHS officers who routinely encounter high-pressure situations and witness the impact of public health crises firsthand, acknowledging the toll that such experiences can take on mental health is crucial. As officers of the USPHS, the commitment to safeguarding the nation’s health often comes with many challenges and stressors. It is imperative for USPHS officers to prioritize their mental well-being and cultivate resilience strategies that enable them to thrive in the face of adversity. By fostering a culture of mental health awareness and implementing proactive measures, officers can enhance their capacity to navigate the demands of their profession with clarity, strength, and resilience.

Self-Awareness and Mindfulness

One of the key pillars of mental resilience is self-awareness, the ability to recognize and understand one’s thoughts, emotions, and reactions. USPHS officers can enhance their self-awareness through mindfulness practices, such as meditation and self-reflection, which enable them to cultivate a greater sense of presence and composure amid the chaos of their profession. When one develops a deeper understanding of their own mental and emotional states, they can better regulate their responses to stressors and make informed decisions that promote well-being.

In addition to mindfulness practices, USPHS officers can bolster their mental resilience through the cultivation of strong social support networks. By fostering connections with colleagues, friends, and loved ones, officers can create a sense of camaraderie and belonging that serves as a buffer against the stresses of their profession. Peer support groups, mentorship programs, and team-building activities can provide valuable opportunities for officers to share experiences, seek advice, and offer encouragement to one another.

Physical Health and a Sense of Purpose

Physical health plays a significant role in mental resilience, and USPHS officers can optimize their well-being by prioritizing regular exercise, nutritious eating, and adequate sleep. Physical activity not only promotes the release of endorphins, the body’s natural mood lifters, but also enhances cognitive function and reduces symptoms of stress and anxiety. By incorporating exercise into their daily routines, officers can boost their resilience and vitality, enabling them to tackle challenges with renewed energy and focus.

Furthermore, USPHS officers can strengthen their mental resilience by fostering a sense of purpose and meaning in their work. By connecting their daily tasks to the broader mission of public health and recognizing the impact of their efforts on the well-being of individuals and communities, officers can cultivate a sense of fulfillment and motivation that sustains them through difficult times. Celebrate the successes, no matter how small, and acknowledge the difference you make in the lives of others.

Seeking Professional Support

Lastly, it is essential for USPHS officers to prioritize self-care and seek professional support when needed. Mental health resources, such as counseling services, employee assistance programs, Corp Care, and peer support networks, are available to officers to help them navigate the challenges of their profession and address any mental health concerns they may encounter. Recognize your own limits and proactively seeking help when needed, and by doing so you can ensure that you receive the support and guidance necessary to maintain mental well-being and continue to fulfill your vital role in protecting and promoting the health and safety of the nation.

Mental Health Awareness Month serves as a reminder of the importance of prioritizing mental well-being and cultivating resilience strategies among USPHS officers. Fostering a culture of mental health awareness, seeking support from peers and professionals, and implementing proactive measures to enhance resilience enables officers to navigate the demands of their profession with clarity, strength, and resilience. Together, we can create a healthier and more resilient USPHS community that is better equipped to meet the challenges ahead.
The power of the Commissioned Corps and the need to grow our base is evident as follows: the 9/11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina, the Ebola outbreak, COVID, the plague of opioids, industrial accidents and train derailments that poison our air and water, and so many other epidemic and endemic health crises have one thing in common. The officers of the USPHS Commissioned Corps were there—saving lives, preventing illness, and providing critical relief to the ailing and the injured. These rigorously trained disease fighters are called upon when and where disaster strikes, pandemics rage, and people are suffering. And, as they have for generations, they fight health inequity by serving the most vulnerable.

The Work of the Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF): The Future of the Foundation Belongs to You!

As you know, COF has existed for 24 years and works to advance public health through the USPHS Commissioned Corps. Through your support, we have accomplished much, but more remains to do. Our annual Training and Scientific Symposium draws thousands of officers and civilian partners. Dozens of family members of officers attend college, aided by our scholarships. Officers expanded their expertise in global health using the RADM Jerrold M. Michael Fellowship.

The Commissioned Corps officers we serve are pleased with our accomplishments but we want to do more. Expanding our programs will have a marked impact on the future of the Commissioned Corps, their families, and the field of public health.

Join with us in supporting America’s Public Health Corps so they can confront the many mounting threats to our nation’s safety. Help COF help these health heroes, so they can help us all. Visit us at www.phscof.org to find out how to make a difference.

On a Personal Note: Remember to always lead with courage and passion for the Corps, COA, and COF!
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Don’t Miss the 2024 USPHS Ensemble Concert at
57th Annual USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium
by LCDR Joseph Allen, PharmD, BCPS, USPHS Music Ensemble

We are excited to invite you to join the USPHS Commissioned Corps Music Ensemble for their annual concert at the 57th Annual USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium. The concert will be held on Tuesday, June 25, 2024, at 1900 hours at the Hyatt Jacksonville Riverfront – Conference Room A. Save the date.

The USPHS Commissioned Corps Music Ensemble is an all-volunteer group consisting of a Ceremonial Band, a Brass Quintet, and a Choral Ensemble, as well as several choral contingents in various locations around the country. The Music Ensemble, known as the “Surgeon General’s Own,” performs at about 20 events each year, including promotions, retirements, award ceremonies, and featured concerts. Notably, the Ensemble has performed at every USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium since 2001. Ensemble musicians are active duty and retired USPHS officers. Ensemble membership is voluntary - members rehearse and perform on their own time outside of their assigned duties.

This year’s concert features a variety of both band, choral, and combined pieces designed to entertain and delight. The program includes selections by Shostakovich, a medley from the Musical “Les Mis,” choral pieces including “Rescue” by Lauren Daigle and a surprise Beatles tune in honor of our retirees. You won’t want to miss a medley entitled “Conga Rhythm” featuring music from the Miami Sound Machine that is sure to get you on your feet. The various selections highlight the Music Ensemble’s ability to bring both classics and popular music to life.

The concert will be preceded by a reception just outside the doors of the performance. You can wear your uniform to the concert, but you are also welcome to change into comfortable civilian clothing prior to arrival. We look forward to seeing you at 1900 hours on Tuesday, June 25 at the USPHS Commissioned Corps Music Ensemble Concert.
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Castillana Duvernay, J.D.
On opening night of the Symposium
Monday, June 24th, 2024
Reception at 1800 hrs.          Dinner at 1900 hrs.
Followed by Dancing and Celebrating
A & C GALA

Dont  forget to reserve your seat!
at the
A & C GALA
On opening night of the Symposium
Featuring Vijay Gupta as the evening’s Keynote Speaker
Violinist                                Ted Talk speaker
Humanitarian                   Philanthropist

Monday, June 24th, 2024
Reception at 1800 hrs.          Dinner at 1900 hrs.
Followed by Dancing and Celebrating

For uniform requirements and more information, visit PhSCOF.org/symposium/
Looking for a great volunteer activity? Do you love supporting communities by giving the gift of life? The Prevention Through Active Community Engagement, PACE, is partnering with One Blood agency at the 57th USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium in Jacksonville, Florida. The lifeblood challenge is set to take place at Hyatt Regency Hotel, Jacksonville, Florida, inside the Big Red Bus at the front entrance of the hotel. During the event, officers in all eleven categories of USPHS will battle one another to identify the category with the highest percentage of blood donation. Officers that do not make it to the 2024 COF Symposium are welcome to donate blood at their local blood donation agency and report their participation accordingly. The event also welcomes the residents of Duval County and the neighboring counties to come out and donate blood to the community. Blood donation at the 2024 Symposium will be seamless and require three steps: (1) register or walk in (2) complete health screening survey, then (3) donate. All USPHS donors will receive a One Blood T-shirt, wellness screening, and a $20 donation to COF. Civilian donors will receive a One Blood T-shirt, wellness screening, and $20 gift card.

Four Chief Professional Officers (CPOs) from the Professional Advisory Committees (PACs) are currently championing the lifeblood challenge event: Health Services PAC; Therapist PAC; Environmental Health PAC; and Engineer PAC. The event planning team is comprised of officers from various USPHS categories, working towards bringing the officers together.

PACE, the leader of the 2024 lifeblood challenge, is a dynamic chartered advisory group of the USPHS Commissioned Corps, under the Office of the United States Surgeon General (OSG). Since its inception in 2013, PACE has become a resource and support network for officers around the country. PACE has a wealth of lesson plans with an additional body of Surgeon General Education Teams (SGET) that provide evidence-based tools for officers to use in educating the community. PACE has representation in each of the 10 Health and Human Service (HHS) regions of the nation.

The 2024 COF Symposium falls under region 4, where LCDR Chiazor Eziakor serves as PACE Regional Coordinator. LCDR Eziakor is additionally the 2024 COF Planning committee community outreach coordinator, as well as the chair for lifeblood challenge event. LCDR Eziakor is a dual certified Family and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, currently stationed with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), United States Penitentiary in Atlanta. She is enthusiastic about health promotion, healthcare equity, and improving access to healthcare. Since becoming the PACE regional coordinator in June 2023, LCDR Eziakor has reinstituted platform where PACE officers meet on a bimonthly basis to plan and execute community activities that support the United States Surgeon General’s health initiatives. As the chair of the COF USPHS lifeblood challenge, LCDR Eziakor oversaw the establishment of a collaborative event planning team, where CDR Colleen Scott, SciPAC chair-elect, serves as the co-chair.

Every two seconds, someone with an acute, chronic, or terminal condition needs a lifesaving blood transfusion. One Blood, a progressive company that values diversity, drive, and dedication is on the lifesaving mission to bridge the gap of blood shortage in the nation. One Blood is a non-profit 501(c)(3) community asset responsible for providing safe, available, and affordable blood. To protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the nation, USPHS officers must support partnerships and causes that work to ensure the best gift, the gift of life through blood donation.

The lifeblood challenge will take place on June 24-25th, 2024, from 0700 to 1500 on both days. Officers can register preliminarily and prepare to complete additional health screening surveys on arrival at the big red bus. Officers that cannot attend 2024 symposium are encouraged to donate blood at their local blood donation center on event days. Blood donation activities that are outside the main event location are to be reported through the registration QR code, to support the donating officers’ category.
The Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) is pleased to announce the RADM Jerrold M. Michael Fellowship. Applications can be submitted from April 1 to May 22, 2024. Applicants must be USPHS Officers in the rank of 01-04 and a current dues paying COA member. This fellowship is a certificate program offered through remote learning by the University of Maryland School of Public Health. The two certificate programs offered this year include Global Health and Epidemiology with a Fall 2024 start date. All programs should be completed within 12 months. For more information on the University of Maryland: https://sph.umd.edu/academics/certificates/ And, for more information on the RADM Michael Fellowship: https://www.phscof.org/scholarships-grants-and-funding-requests/radm-michael-fellowship/

As with each scholarship and grant cycle, volunteer reviewers are necessary. The dedicated people who take on this role are integral to the success of the scholarship and grant cycles. Depending on the number of applications received, each reviewer is assigned 5-6 applications to score using an established scoring rubric. If you are interested in being a reviewer for the Family Member Scholarship, RDML Mishoe Scholarship or RADM Michael Fellowship, please send an email to the COF Grants Manager, Annette Beadle, at abeadle@coausphs.org with “Volunteer Reviewer” in the subject line.
USPHS Officers Promote Science and Public Health at the 15th Annual Morgan State University Science Fair

by CDR Rod Barrais DHSc, MS, MLS, CDR Diane Richardson MHSA, PMP, CDR Reginald Smith JD, MBA, BSN, RN, LCDR Tanya Grandison MPH, LCDR Janesia Robbs MPH, MCHES

Five officers represented the District of Columbia chapter of the Commissioned Officers Association (DCCOA) as special judges at the 15th Annual Morgan State University (MSU) Science-Mathematics-Engineering Fair in Baltimore, MD on March 16, 2024. For the past 29 years, the DCCOA has sponsored community outreach programs across the DC Metropolitan area where commissioned officers serve as judges for middle and high school science fairs. DCCOA offers Meritorious Achievement Awards, Distinguished Achievement Awards, and US Public Health Service (USPHS) Medallions to deserving students, encouraging the next generation of scientists. The officers were excited to represent the USPHS and support a Historically Black University’s endeavor to promote STEM in public and private charter schools throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. As special science fair judges, the officers had the opportunity to judge over 80 projects that focused on innovations in engineering, environmental, and biological sciences. During the judging, the officers had brief exchanges with the students on the scientific methods involved in the projects and the real-world public health application. Moreover, officers answered questions regarding the USPHS. After the officers conferred regarding the various projects, six Meritorious Achievement Awards, three Distinguished Achievement Awards in Biological Sciences, and three Distinguished Achievement Awards in Engineering Sciences were awarded to deserving students and participants. LCDR Tanya Grandison, MSU School of Public Health and Policy alum, has proudly served as the DCCOA Lead Judge at MSU since 2014 and has been able to engage with over 400 student projects. Many students recognize LCDR Grandison each year and have personally invited her to view their projects during the fair, citing her recommendations encouraged them to make additional improvements. This was CDR Diane Richardson's third time volunteering for the MSU Science Fair, and she's always amazed at the level creativity and outstanding scientific research from the students. After the fair, she commented, “Science fairs are a powerful learning opportunity which allow the student to demonstrate their critical thinking and communication skills in addition to math, science, and language arts. I truly enjoyed engaging with the middle and high school students and learning from their innovative projects and solutions addressing real world problems such as mental health, the opioid crisis, and environmental challenges in the surrounding Maryland communities.” CDR Rod Barrais has participated in this event in years past. He stated, “It was a humbling and inspiring opportunity to provide coaching, influence and motivate the next generation of STEM leaders.”

As first-time special judges for the MSU Science Fair, LCDR Reginald Smith and LCDR Janesia Robbs thoroughly enjoyed engaging with young scientists. LCDR Reginald Smith stated, “I was impressed and inspired by the scientific and academic acumen of the science fair participants, especially the real-world applications of the projects. I believe these same students will be among America’s future STEM leaders and will eventually lead the world in STEM innovation.” LCDR Janesia Robbs, MSU School of Community Health and Policy alum, was excited to be back on campus. She commented, “Participating as a judge for the MSU Science Fair was very rewarding as a former adolescent and young adult health educator in Baltimore City. It was inspiring to learn about students’ projects and provide constructive feedback.”

Science fairs are a valuable opportunity for USPHS officer volunteers to support as well as encourage the next generation of scientists and our local academic communities. Each of the judges look forward to supporting DCCOA’s Science Fair Planning Committee and volunteering as judges at Morgan State next year.
OBITUARIES

CAPT (Ret.) Lena Fawkes
Bardstown, KY - Lena Sue Fawkes, 79, passed away Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023, at her home with her daughters by her side. She was born on July 2, 1944, in Lynch, KY, to the late Frank and Mildred Comer Damron. Sue was a veteran of the US Public Health Service. She retired as a Captain after 21 years with the Department of Justice. Sue had her NP and CRNA licenses. She was a volunteer for the Bardstown Community Clinic. Sue was a member of Bardstown Baptist Church where she was in the WMU, served on Administrative Council, and was a member of Open Door Sunday School class. She was always involved with any special events going on at the church and volunteered in many other capacities.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, James Eugene “Jim” Fawkes. Sue is survived by two daughters, Susan (Steve) Sweat of Bardstown, Rachel (Matt) Harney of Cynthiana; two sisters, Barbara Jeanes of Louisville and Kay Hulsey of Knoxville, Tenn.; and four grandchildren, Daniel Sweat, Grace Sweat, Conner Harney and Cooper Harney.

CAPT (Ret.) Patrice Robins
Laurel, MD - Patrice Ann (McCurley) Robins was born in Ada, OK on March 24, 1954 to Robert L. “Bob” and Mary “Ann” (Jones) McCurley. She died suddenly at her family home in on February 10, 2024.

After growing up as a military child, Patrice joined the U.S. Army after high school. Patrice then attended Nursing School at the University of Oklahoma, where she met her husband, Bruce.

Upon graduation from the WRAIN program, her father was also honored to administer the oath.

In 1981, Patrice transferred to the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) and served in multiple patient care, research, and senior administrative capacities until her retirement in October 2000. After retirement from USPHS, Patrice worked for 17 years as a home-care hospice nurse until her death.

She is survived by her mother, Ann, of Norman, OK, husband, Bruce, daughter Mandy (Jason) Ouellette, grandchildren Jacob and Madison of Laurel, MD, her brother Mark McCurley of Singapore, She was preceded in death by her son, Matthew, and her father, Major (Ret) R.L (Bob) McCurley.

CAPT (Ret.) Margaret Howe – Life Member
Morganville, NJ - Margaret J. Howe, age 88, daughter of Thomas Ambrose Howe and Marion Bailey Howe, previously of Morrisdale, Pennsylvania, passed away on December 26, 2023.

Margaret was born on April 15, 1935 in Morrisdale. A longtime resident of northern Virginia, Margaret graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing and received a Master’s in Nursing Administration from Columbia University. She had a long career with the U.S. Public Health Service and retired as a Captain.

In retirement, she served both as a tour guide to our nation’s capital and as a Traveler’s Aide at Reagan National Airport in Washington, DC.

She was predeceased by her parents and her sisters Marion Rita Howe and Nora Marie Howe. She is survived by her sister Cecelia Howe Rudy, Cecelia's husband John, and their children, Margaret’s nephews, John and Christopher Rudy.
by LT Lillian Kavishe RN, BSN

Looking for a great volunteer activity? LT Lillian Kavishe and The Black Commission Officers Advisory Group (BCOAG), Community Wellness Subcommittee (CWS), have teamed up with Timucuan Parks Foundation for the 2024 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium. The Symposium will take place in Jacksonville, Florida. Officers can perform this activity anywhere from 21 -30 June; before, during and after the symposium. The goal is to collect trash and dispose of it properly.

The role of BCOAG within USPHS is to provide advice and consultation to the Surgeon General in conjunction with the Minority Officers Leadership Committee (MOLC) on matters related to the Commissioned Corps. The BCOAG provides similar advisory assistance to the Professional Advisory Committees (PACs) and their respective Chief Professional Officers (CPOs). All BCOAG members are knowledgeable professionals who represent a cross-section of interests, concerns, and responsibilities of Black officers in agencies and organizations staffed by USPHS personnel.

LT Lillian Kavishe RN BSN currently serves as a Mental Health/Behavioral Health Nurse specialist for the Veteran’s Health Administration (VHA) with the Hampton VA at Albemarle Community Outpatient Clinic. She is passionate about ensuring that her patients receive high quality and evidence-based care. LT Kavishe was recently nominated for the DAISY Award for her exemplary work. LT Kavishe was Commissioned into the regular USPHS Commissioned Corps in Oct 2020. LT Kavishe is a member of BCOAG and Region 9 Lead. Prior to being Commissioned as an officer, LT Kavishe served 12 years in the US Army Reserve. LT Kavishe has over 12 years of public health nursing experience, spanning from serving Active-Duty Soldiers and their beneficiaries in South Korea to serving the local health department in Columbus Ohio and Native Americans in Arizona.

The Timucuan Parks Foundation also known as “Preservation Project Jacksonville,” is the 501(c)(3) charity supporting more than 23 wild parks and preserves located in the greater Jacksonville area. The Foundation has protected, valued, and celebrated these natural and historical environments. The mission of the foundation is to preserve, promote, and protect the Timucuan parks through fundraising, marketing, and advocacy. The Foundation is committed to support the city, state, and national parks through raising local and national awareness and in telling the historical story of North Florida.

LT Kavishe chose this event for several reasons. First, the mission of this foundation aligns with the mission of the USPHS; to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the nation. Secondly, as USPHS officers we serve in underserved communities and support most of the native and indigenous populations across the nation. This event’s history aligns with indigenous population, and I believe by having officers volunteer in this area with rich indigenous history during the symposium not only highlights our mission but also showcase our desire to continue serving the underserved area even during conferences and symposium. By volunteering for this event, USPHS officers also support the surgeon general’s priorities by connecting with communities, staying active, and maintaining visibility. This event will showcase USPHS officers and enhance their visibility in the community.

Volunteer anywhere from 21 to 30 June 2024. You can pick any Timucuan Park; the following parks are a less than 30-minute drive from the symposium venue – Exchange Club Island, Reddie Point Reserve, Jacksonville Baldwin Trail, Bull Bay Preserve. Take a fellow officer, water, a 30-gallon trash bag, and work gloves (bring it with you) to a park of your choice.

Please wear appropriate clothing for the weather and take a photo of your volunteer group. Upon completion of your volunteering, leave the closed trash bag in the area and will be collected by designated park workers, and email your group picture to LT Kavishe RN BSN (Lillian.kavishe@va.gov). Please complete the online volunteer form here.
countless hours for the betterment of our communities and the American way of life.¹

Over time, this important week of celebration was expanded to occur over the entire month of April. The theme of the 2024 celebration was Every Moment Matters, a theme chosen to emphasize “…the importance of every volunteer and each contribution they make at a moment when we need support more than ever. The sharing of time, skills, empathy, and creativity is vital to the inclusivity, strength, and wellbeing of our communities.”²

This holds true for your volunteerism in the Commissioned Officers Association (COA) and the PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF). We can accomplish nothing without your energy, resourcefulness, and conviction. Please know that I am grateful for whatever you can contribute, whether it is a shorter duration ‘micro volunteering” role or a position that will span several years, for example serving on the Board of Directors, Board of Trustees, or in leadership positions with your Local Branch.

If you want to be more involved but unsure where to start, how about serving on a COA National Committee? Opportunities exist from page 1 on the Awards, Communications & Public Relations, Constitution & Bylaws, Legislative Affairs, Local Branch, Outreach, and Retired Officers Committees. To learn more please visit www.coausphs.org and choose “Committees” under the “About” tab. If interested, you must apply at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2024COAcommittee by the deadline of May 24, 2024.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the countless volunteers who generously donate time and effort to support the Association and Foundation. Your selfless contributions empower us to make a meaningful difference, to support each other, and to grow. As a volunteer, you embody the true spirit of community and service, and I thank you.

Our next Frontline publication is a combined June/July edition. Until then!

References

¹ https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-88/pdf/STATUTE-88-Pg2476.pdf
² https://volunteer.ca/index.php?MenuId=482

provisions of S. 2297, including the parental leave provision, will make it into the language of the NDAA. Similarly, Senator Wyden’s bill S. 2590, the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps Operations and Readiness Act (the PHS COR Act) also failed to pick up any cosponsors other than Senator Duckworth, and there is no companion bill in the House.

Your Legislative Affairs Committee is focusing on assembling a list of priorities for the first session of the 119th Congress that meets beginning in January 2025. The Committee will vote on a list and send it to the COA Board of Directors so they can vote on it during the June Board meeting at the Symposium. That process will ensure that your advocates can hit the ground running in January.

We Welcome New Members of COA, April 1 - April 30, 2024

LT Jeremy Bailey, FL
LT Gy Choi, VA
LT Andrew Duong, KS
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